

All last winter dust poured through the cracks in the room that I work in. Today the same cracks are filled by mud and silt. During the recent big rainy spell the draw mapped to run in front of the ranch house changed course and ran through the ranch house.

The resulting mess is below the standards set by the Good Housekeeping Institute. However, people who have a taste for a mossy, mildewed grotto decor would be pleased. Swamp fauna and flora are flourishing in the baseboards.

Toadstools are growing underneath my desk. Though I am not a toadstool expert, I do know the Shortgrass Country well enough to know that these are the toxic variety. Poison plants thrive in the area. I suppose I could go to the trouble of having these toadstools analyzed, but I'm nearly sure that it'd be cheaper to go on with the pinto bean routine and skip the free toadstools.

As long as the toadstools will mind whatever a toadstool's business is, they were welcome to continue. Forty some years of life has taught me that a lot worse things can happen to a man than having a toadstool garden underneath his desk. Compared to what drouths and tax agents can bring, toadstool problems aren't in the running. I just wish that the worst calamity that ever hit this ranch was a big influx of toadstools. Several times a cluster of right poisonous toadstools would have made a cushion against whatever was at hand. Worry all you want to about the grief and miseries of humanity, but don't ever let a toadstool epidemic get you down.

The frog that moved into the fireplace is a different matter. Unlike the toadstools, he can't be quiet. He's so stupid that he keeps croaking to his echo in the chimney. Wet weather had put him in an amorous humor. He had made up his mind that croaking out a love song up a rock chimney is going to beckon a mother frog, and I'm sure you know enough about the facts of nature to know what else he figures is going to happen. Crickets on the hearth will bring good luck, but all frogs bring are plenty of racket and too many tadpoles. He has about one more day to make up his mind to either be quiet or try to dodge the poker.

Instead of shoveling the mud out of the house, I'm employing a new housekeeping tactic. This time I'm going to let my sons track the mud outdoors. Mud needs to be taught that it can be tracked out as easily as it can be tracked in. Mud has been running over folks for ages. It wasn't invited to wash in here, so as far as I'm concerned, whenever the mud is ready to leave, it can get out the best way it can.

Serious consequences could arise from sheltering the toadstools and frogs. Nature lovers have given ranchers the killer image. Trouble has already arisen by our criticism of the city people's use of steel traps and delay poison to kill off the mice population and tension has built up over our failure to endorse the use of hired exterminators to smother termites in urban areas. I sure don't want to get mixed up in a battle with the environmentalist group. They've got so much power now that I'd be afraid to say scat to a pigeon crossing dead center over Lincoln's monument.

August flowers are blooming in the Shortgrass Country. Creeks are running clear water. Things couldn't be any better than they are now.